5:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1938 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

[3] twenty miles from Lake Nyasa (1,500 feet). A little compact country, [13] secluded until very recently from any effective external contacts, slightly over 1,000 square miles in extent.[1]

[12] The soil, particularly that of the higher ground in the north of the [34] Nyakyusa country, is not in itself very rich, but, as between 100 and 130 [16] inches of rain usually fall each year, the district is one of the most fertile in the whole of Tanganyika; two crops a year are often grown on the same patch of ground, and the African population is over eighty to the square [23] mile. There is no infected tsetse fly and cattle are the most prized possession of the Nyakyusa.

63 For historical reasons, which we will discuss in a later section, the Nyakyusa have never been united under any one paramount chief of their own, but live in a number (nearly 100 at the present day) of tiny but traditionally independent chiefdoms. For these chiefdoms the numerous streams which run down from the north into Lake Nyasa and the crests of the ridges of land between them, form natural boundaries.

[33] The country, of course, is not all of equal economic value, parts of it [34] are stony and mountainous, other parts, and particularly the plain in the south, consist of deep and level soil; and the population is heavier on the plain than on the higher ground. Further, on the higher ground, there exist numerous old volcanic craters filled with rich moist soil and these, being more fertile than the surrounding land, are particularly valued by [24] the Nyakyusa. Again, of the two chief economic crops of this district, one, coffee, can only be grown on the higher ground while the other, rice, can only be grown on or near the plain. And at every point their system of land tenure is partially determined by such physical factors as these.

3. *THE USES AND VALUE OF LAND*

• 31 The Nyakyusa use their land for building on, for agriculture, for pasture, for hunting and fishing; they collect firewood, reeds, thatching-grass, mushrooms and other wild vegetables there; they draw water from its streams and bathe daily in them; on their land they grow bamboos, banyans, *imiyungati* trees[2] and coffee; they keep bees; they dance, they fight, they walk and lie down upon it; their land is both the receptacle of refuse and the location of religious ritual, while their doctors continually wander over its surface in search of magical medicines.

Not all these uses of land give rise to laws, moral rules or conventions, but only those uses which tend to lead men into conflict with one another or into mutual embarrassment. The only reasons for the existence of

[1] The whole of Rungwe District is 1,866 square miles, but this includes the hills of the Nkuli and Lambya as well.
[2] I have not been able to discover the botanical name of this tree.

S:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1938 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

rules of land tenure are firstly to prevent, as far as possible, such conflicts and embarrassments from arising, and secondly, to facilitate their resolution when aroused. If, then, there is no danger of conflict or embarrassment neither is there a need for any rule at all. A Nyakyusa doctor wandering in the uncultivated bush looking for medicines cannot harm any man's interest, cannot hurt any man's feelings, and he is therefore free to gather what and where he will.

In many of its uses, however, land is scarce and so leads men into competition for it. When, in any society, land, or some other material of action, is scarce, we say that it has economic value; and wherever anything has economic value then, of necessity, its use must always be effectively limited and defined by rules of law or of morality or by convention, for only by such limitations of human action can anarchy be kept at bay and ordered human society continue to exist.

The scarcity or economic value of land is, in most of the Nyakyusa chiefdoms, more a matter of quality than of mere quantity. In some few chiefdoms there is, however, already threatening an actual lack of arable land, and it is almost certain that there will in time be a general shortage. The natural increase of population is to some extent counterbalanced by ever-increasing emigration into neighbouring, less densely populated districts; but rapidly changing economic and technical conditions will of themselves, in all probability, bring about a shortage of land. Ploughs (over 100 of them) are already in use and are multiplying many times over the area which one man can cultivate, while the recent development of an external market for surplus food is stimulating many men to greater effort even with the hoe. An area amply sufficient, with primitive subsistence agriculture, for about 100,000 persons may well prove quite insufficient when ploughs are employed and when to the 100,000 mouths are added, through the medium of the market, many thousand more. Rungwe District is already one of the main sources not only of labour but also of food for the nearby Lupa gold fields, while its rapidly increasing crop of Native-grown coffee now finds its way to Europe. In 1936 produce to the value of some £24,000* was sold by this district to the outside world.

At the moment, however, there is no general shortage of land. It is the best ground which is scarce, not land as such. The best building sites, the best plots of arable ground and the best pastures have economic value and their use is genuinely defined and limited in the Nyakyusa system of land-tenure.

* Figure estimated for the whole district (Nkuyuma, Ndali and Lundyo, about 150,000 persons in all) on the basis of information supplied by the courtesy of the Agricultural Office, Tukuyu.

5:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1938 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

kind of grass grows there maize will do well, or maybe ground-nuts. Some grass-lands have very poor soil in which no crop at all will grow properly, the one we call *kyusi* for example, or again the one we call *amyapesi* ("the ant"); no one hoes these lands. Some gardens we hoe on the higher ground, others near the streams, either right in the mud by the water or else in ground that is merely moist. On the higher ground we hoe millet, peas, sweet-potatoes, cassava and some other crops; in the muddy places by the water we hoe yams, building huge ridges for them called *fikimbike*; and there too we sometimes put in (during the dry season) the shoots of sweet potatoes that we shall later plant elsewhere. If the soil is only a little muddy and is mixed with sand, then we plant maize there. The right soil for beans we call *kibumbu*—a red soil which is sometimes mixed with sand. Ground-nuts we either plant in the *kibumbu* (if it is the sandy kind) or else just in sand. Whenever a man is hoeing a field for millet or ground-nuts or sweet-potatoes, he can tell just from the soil whether his crop will do well or not."[1]

And so also the Nyakyusa well understand the different qualities of pasture. The cattle are herded by small boys but on most mornings one of the men also goes out with the herd to show the boys where to pasture it and what grass-land to avoid.

Into the value of arable land sentiment also enters and men like, *ceteris paribus*, to hoe their gardens where they themselves or their fathers and brothers have hoed before. So too the value of building plots is determined both by practical and emotional considerations: large and relatively level sites on which bananas grow well are preferred to narrow or steeply sloping ones or to sites where bananas do badly, but, on the other hand, of two equally convenient sites that with family associations is normally preferred. And in the case of building sites religious considerations may also enter. A friend of mine told me that, when his father died, he did not move but left his father's site vacant with the new grave upon it; a year or two later his millet crop unaccountably failed and the diviner told him that his father's spirit was angry that no one had "swept his grave," i.e. that the plot had been left vacant. My friend did not actually move, even then, for he preferred his own site; he compromised by the performance of a ritual sacrifice to his father's spirit. But in such cases a man will often move to his dead father's site for fear of further misfortune.

We have discussed briefly the purposes for which and the techniques by means of which the Nyakyusa use their land, and we have indicated a few of the main considerations which lead them to value some particular

[1] Text written for me by a literate Nyakyusa.

9:Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
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partly to the closer spacing of children. Whereas four years between births was conventional formerly, two or less is now usual. One of the characteristics of the present population is a disproportion between the sexes, the females outnumbering the males by 100 to 87·9 even when due allowance has been made for men away at work.[1] This disproportion is characteristic also of African populations in the south[2] and it appears likely that it is due to a wide difference in the survival rate of men and women, but the vital statistics necessary to test this hypothesis are lacking.

The increase in population, and the demand for coffee gardens and rice fields by men who prefer to earn cash by agriculture rather than as migrant labourers, has led to a shortage of land, already acute in the fertile lake-shore plain, and imminent in the coffee-growing villages of the hills.[3] Much land that was previously pasture land has been taken into cultivation, and signs of overstocking are everywhere apparent. Hillsides that in 1938 were covered with grass, waist high, now have a thin stubble. To aggravate matters, the care of stock is less efficient than it used to be because it is left to very small boys, their seniors being occupied with school and hoeing. Often the cattle are both ill nourished and covered with ticks—something that was never seen when they were herded by adolescents and carefully hand-dressed. The villagers themselves are as much concerned as the agricultural officers over the shortage of pasture and the decrease in the milk supply, but they are not prepared to accept the remedies recommended: namely, reduction of stock and stall-feeding. The advice of Europeans on the growing of rice and coffee crops, which they introduced to the district, is acceptable, but the Nyakyusa argue

[1] The Census figures cannot be taken as exact, but they give some indication of the increase in population, and the disproportion between men and women. In 1931 the population of Rungwe District was given as 133,080. In 1948 it was 178,588. In 1931 the proportion of males to females (Kisiba and Nyakyusa in Rungwe district) was 73·6 : 100 (Tanganyika Territory, *Census of the Native Population 1931*). In 1941 the figure for Tukuyu district as a whole was 80 : 100 (Tanganyika Territory, *East African Population Census, 1948*). Allowing for 8,800 men away without wives (estimate for 1934 less 10 per cent), the proportion is 87·9 : 100 (cf. P. H. Gulliver, *Report on the Migration of African Workers to the South from the Southern Highland Provinces, with special Reference to the Nyakyusa of Rungwe District, February 1953*, p. 18). The discrepancy in the figures given for adults was 60 : 100 in 1948, but the ages of males and females classed as 'adult' are uncertain.

[2] D. H. Houghton and E. M. Walton, *The Economy of a Native Reserve, Keiskammahoek Rural Survey, vol. 2*, pp. 24-6, 31. The sex ratio for Keiskammahoek District is 73·6 males : 100 females.

[3] cf. P. H. Gulliver, *Nyakyusa Land and Population*, 1956.

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
F'N17 Ngonde F'N17
Nyakyusa

that they have always been cattle men and they need no instruction on cattle. The tension over stock limitation and soil conservation, so acute in many parts of Africa, is only just appearing in Rungwe district, but potentially it is serious.

Pressure on land, and the planting of a valuable long-term crop such as coffee, have undermined the traditional organization of age-villages. The old men are no longer prepared to move to make way for their sons and, without a new deal in land each generation, the territorial separation of the generations is blurred. Boys' villages are no longer visible in the hills near Rungwe mission, partly because so many young men are away, either at school or in employment, but largely because most of the land is taken up with coffee gardens. Homesteads are being built farther apart as men lay out coffee round their houses, and sons often build on a corner of their father's estate instead of in a separate village. On the plain, also, the pressure of population blurs the boundaries between generations. Only in the least heavily populated middle belt are numerous boys' villages still clearly visible, and here too a 'coming out' has recently been celebrated, with some redistribution of land. The scarcest land, that in old volcanic craters, was always inherited, like cattle, not reallocated each generation, and almost all cultivated land is now treated in this way. In many chiefdoms, therefore, a young man looks to his father or senior brother for land, rather than to the village headman, and inheritance is supremely important. But the form of inheritance is changing: property now goes directly from father to son, not as formerly to each of a group of full brothers before reverting to the senior son of the eldest of them. The claims of more distant kinsmen on inherited stock are less than they used to be; such stock becomes the exclusive property of father and sons, rather than property in which members of a lineage of three or four generations have reciprocal rights. The main economic bond which held the lineage together, the exchange of cattle, is thus broken.

Formerly a marriage was a contract between lineages rather than between individuals. A girl was betrothed before puberty to a man of her father's choice and should he die she was still regarded as married to his heir. Should she die a sister replaced her. Ideally a marriage bond between lineages lasted for generations, each man who died being replaced by a brother or son, each woman by a sister or brother's daughter. The choice of a partner in marriage

10:Culliver E-5 (1954-1955)1954 F307 Ngoode F307
Nyakyusa

low conditioned. These areas can easily be picked out today by the absence of village sites and banana groves. There was something of a rush to grab land in such areas and in the less densely populated parts of the chiefdoms. Today in my personal experience – for no general survey has been attempted – there remains little or no unused land within the readily-growing region which can, by native techniques, be brought under the plough, and indeed men are attempting to grow paddy on unsuitably raised land where inundation is inadequate. Communal cattle pastures have shrunk as arable holdings extended until they remain only where cultivation is prohibitive.

The demand for land has far outrun the physical supply, and in 1955 is still assured to be insatiable. The initial cycle was that a desire for more money to permit of a higher standard of living created a demand for more land on which to produce more cash crops; but the increased level of income then further stimulated money demands to raise standards higher again, thus bringing a renewed demand for land. The cycle has now been halted by the lack of further land to meet the people's needs, but the demand remains nevertheless and is indeed increased by rising costs of living.

This economic picture is, of course, oversimplified, but it may serve to illustrate the nature of forces at work in the situation. I would not wish to overemphasize the snowball effect, for the bulk of the population remains still largely content with only a little over earlier standards; but increasing numbers of men and their families are coming to seek something better. Bicycles have become something of a general necessity; a variety of good clothing and shoes is considered quite essential. Only a single decade before the Nyakyusa women still generally went about in the traditional nudity, whereas in 1955 they must have ranked among the very best-dressed African women in the Territory. European-type household goods, crockery and utensils are common. The demand for luxury, that is for a higher standard of living, has also been greatly stimulated by the experiences of the thousands of labour migrants returning from southern towns and mines, and by the cash and goods they bring back with them.[1]

It is not possible for me to attempt to suggest what a desirable acreage would be for a contemporary Nyakyusa, because money demands, crop yields and selling prices change and the desire for higher standards of living also alter as the potentialities of the new cash economy are increasingly understood. In 1954 the approximate average of Sh.200/- per paddy cultivator was earned from perhaps two or three acres of arable land, but an indeterminable amount of the crop was kept back for home food requirements. As will be shown later many men's paddy fields could have been little more than an acre, and many men, specifically young men, had no paddy land at all. Certainly there were few who held what they considered, as a reasonable estimate, to be sufficient land.

This universal cash crop agriculture and the continuing demand for higher standards of living, and therefore for higher money incomes, is the real cause of the new and rather sudden pressure of population on the land. Of course this economic process operates within a situation of relatively dense population and in a peasant community where land is almost the only form of capital and alternative enterprise is small. The gradual increase of population, although probably small, further aggravates the difficult situation.

Arable Holdings

It was not possible to obtain adequate, satisfactory data to allow the calculation of local population densities, and the detailed results of the 1948

1. See Gulliver, P. H., 1957, an assessment of the cash economy of Ukerewe in which a great deal of the data on the cash brought back by returning labour migrants are given on p. 88.

10:Gulliver E-5 (1954-1955) 1958 F367 Ngoode F817
Nyakyusa

Census have never been issued.[1] However in some sample villages I very roughly measured arable holdings, and my results provide new information even though they can be illustrative only of the modern situation.

In each of the eight villages chosen[2] the arable holdings of all the adult male members (whether at home or away at work at the time) of the whole village, or occasionally of a distinct section of it, were measured by the simple and rough method of pacing the borders of every separate plot and converting the resultant figures into yards and thus to acreages. The actual pacing was done entirely by myself in order to try to maintain an even stride on all occasions, but in each village I was well supported by a team of four or five villagers, always including the headman and his assistants. The figures obtained relate only to arable holdings and bear no determinate relation either to crop yields or to non-arable land in the villages concerned. The results are summarized in Table III below.

TABLE III

ARABLE HOLDINGS IN EIGHT VILLAGES

Village and chiefdom	No. of land-holders	Average holding in acres	No. of men holding more than:— 1 acre	10 acres	Average size of plots in acres
Kasesi					
Mwamasangula ...	39	2.2	31	1	1
Boko Mwakyusa ...	48	3.0	33	0	1.3
Mwang Mwakibete ...	36	1.9	6	1	0.6
Lugombo Kasesi ...	26	1.6	3	0	0.6
Mpangati					
Mwakipesile ...	45	1.1	1	0	0.3
Kasesi Kyusa ...	40	1.3	1	0	0.4
Lusesa Mwakibete ...	12	1.3	0	0	0.4
Bwaba Mwasipesile ...	36	1.0	0	0	0.4
	372 men		75 men (8.4%)	2 men	

From this Table it can be seen that in the chiefdoms of Kasesi and Mwakipesile, in the villages concerned, the average holding per man was about one and a half acres – and my impression was that in the southern parts of Lusesa's chiefdom and elsewhere immediately surrounding the lake shore similar conditions existed. It may be noted too that in these cases there were large numbers of young men without holdings at all. On the other hand, in the selected villages in the chiefdoms of Mwamasangula and Mwakyusa, the average holdings were about twice as large – three acres; and fewer young men were landless. More also the cases of the villages in the chiefdoms of Mwamipesile and Mwakibete in the more northerly parts of the Lake Plains, where the average holdings were one and 1.3 acres respectively, and where yet there was arable land unused and available. In these parts paddy cultivation is very limited because of the higher and hilly country, and the people remain little more than subsistence farmers – perhaps they may be taken as not unlike the traditional, pre-European subsistence cultivators.

Unfortunately I am unable to relate these figures of arable holdings to the total land available in each village, for this would have required survey work beyond my competence. Non-arable land is utilized for village sites with banana groves, roads and paths, pasturage, etc.; but the position is further complicated by varying amounts of unusable land in my sample villages. To give only two examples: within the boundaries of Mpangati village, Mwakipesile's chiefdom, there are many acres of land adjacent to the Mbaka river which today are unusable because of deep flooding from

1. Population figures of one kind or another are available even for the separate chiefdoms, let alone for ecological units.
2. Their approximate locations are indicated on the accompanying sketch-map.

10:Gulliver E-5 (1954-1955)1958 F317 Ngonde F317
Nyakyusa

the river in spate during the wet season, although here and there a few plots are cultivated on slightly raised ground. Similarly in Kapugi village, Korosa's chiefdom, some parts are heavily inundated by the Kiwira river. In both these cases flooding has made unusable ground which was cultivated and even built on a generation ago; the degree of annual flooding seems to be decreasing again now so that very slowly a certain amount of new land is becoming available. This cyclical change appears to be directly connected with the long-term rise and fall of the level of Lake Nyasa. On the other hand, in more fortunate villages such as Ikolo, Mwakyusa's chiefdom, and Kapugi, Mwamasangula's chiefdom, there is rather more common pasturage remaining, and village sites, paths, etc., are noticeably less restricted.

The following arithmetical observations may be noted as permitting, perhaps, some guide to population densities in the Lake Plains:-

Persons per sq. mile	*Total acreage per family of five*	*Arable holding per family of five if proportion of total land under arable holdings is —*	
		one-third	*two-fifths*
300	10.7	3.6	4.3
400	8	2.7	3.2
500	6.4	2.1	2.6
600	5.3	1.8	2.1

(N.B. The statistically average family is composed of five people)

It has been suggested by the Agricultural Field Officer, Tukuyu, that for the whole of Rungwe District perhaps 30 per cent. of all land is under cultivation. He was not prepared to place any reliance on this figure, and certainly for the Lake Plains it must be higher.

To summarise my own tentative conclusions and in order to obtain some kind of picture of the current land situation, I suggest the following division into regions:-

A. The flood plains proper

1. **Very high-density region** – the arable land available under present conditions amounts to about 1½-2 acres per adult male and the local density of population is probably in the region of 500 persons per square mile: – in most of the chiefdoms of Mwasulama, Korosa and Lazarus, the south-eastern part of Mwakipesile's and the eastern part of Mwakyusa's chiefdoms.

2. **High-density region** – there is available about 3 acres of arable land per adult male and the local density of population is between 300 and 400 persons per square mile: – in the chiefdoms of Mwamasangula, Mwanyilu and Mwakilima, the southern part of Mwakilasa's, the centre of Mwakyusa's and much of Mwandemele's chiefdoms.

B. The remainder of the Lake Plains (Ntebela)

3. **Low-density region** – here there remains much vacant land (some usable, some scarcely usable) and population density is probably little over 100 persons per square mile, and even lower than that in the most northerly parts: – the northern, higher areas comprising the north of Mwakyusa's (Mwisula's) chiefdom, the remainder of Mwandemele's, the whole of Mwantipulo's, Mwakatundu's and Mwakipege's chiefdoms, together with the northern part of Mwakipesile's and of Mwakilasa's chiefdoms.

This summary description is, and can be, only very approximate, taking no account of the complexity of local variations to be seen on the ground. It is illustrated in the accompanying sketch-map.

It may be emphasised that in the two high-density regions practically all available land is in use. In the "high-density region" (No. 2 above) it may be possible to reduce slightly the non-productive areas taken up by village sites, but nowhere will this be easy or even desirable, and already most of the vacant spaces between houses are packed with banana groves, small

10:Gulliver E-5 (1954-1955) 1958 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

plots of maize, squashes, tobacco, etc., and useful trees (bamboo, citrus mango, kapok, oil-palm and firewood). Artificial drainage would, of course, make more land available along the rivers, but this is in general beyond the abilities and resources of the Nyakyusa without considerable outside assistance.

Finally, in this matter it is to be remembered that in addition to a man's arable holding, each of his wives has a banana plot at her house from which she obtains her staple foodstuff. Such plots amount to perhaps about a tenth of an acre on the average. On the other hand, the Nyakyusa are no longer prepared to tolerate a predominantly banana diet. Rice has, in most areas of the Lake Plains, become almost as important as bananas.

Large-sized Holdings

Some blame for this novel shortage of land and the smallness of the average holding has often been laid upon that minority of Nyakyusa who have exceptionally large holdings, and also upon the immigrants from beyond the Lake Plains who have come to settle there during the past decade.

The occupiers of large-sized holdings are rather fewer than has sometimes been supposed. The notoriety of large land-owners, such as some of the modern chiefs with as much as 25-30 acres, has brought more attention to them than is really warranted. Most chiefs and village headmen have arable holdings of above average size, as a result of their privileged positions in the land allocation system and because of their prestige influence; but they remain a small minority and their number is bound to decrease in the future as inheritance causes sub-division of their holdings, for most of them have also more than the average number of wives and sons. In the two high-density regions it is clearly impossible for any man much to increase his present holding. As will be shown later (see page 24) the modern trend is not unnaturally towards a dangerous fragmentation of holdings.

The data obtained in this matter for my eight village samples are summarised in Table III, page 15. In those villages the two men out of 372 who held more than ten acres were a village headman and the father of a chief.[1] There were seven other headmen and one chief as well as some other locally influential men amongst the people covered by my surveys, but most of them held more than ten acres. There are, of course, some commoners amongst the large land-holders; many of them are close relatives of the chief or headmen and have thus received preferential treatment. Some, however, are ordinary villagers who were perspicacious enough to see future trends and to obtain land in the early days before most men realised its new value and when vacant areas were still easily available. Such men are tending to become a new, wealthy class, but on the other hand they are particularly susceptible to the begging of kinsmen and friends who have insufficient land. If they are not to be regarded as unneighbourly or even anti-social (perhaps practising witchcraft) they are virtually compelled to be generous sometimes, both with their land and with their profits.

On the whole this minority of men excites little attention or jealousy among the Nyakyusa, who indeed take it for granted that their chiefs and headmen will have more land than ordinary villagers, as befits their status and prestige. If it be thought that by reducing somehow the size and number of these unusually large holdings then the land shortage might be partly relieved, it is a false hope. I scarcely think that the Nyakyusa would welcome any such attempt at interference by administrative action, but in any case it would only provide minor and temporary relief here and there and would not be worth the executive difficulties involved.

1. This named man should be a chief himself but he was dismissed by Government on his imprisonment for peculation. He still holds much of the prestige and privilege of a chief for he was a duly elected authority in purely local government affairs.

10:Gulliver K-5 (1954-1955)0958 F'817 Ngonde F'817
Nyakyusa

The Problem of Immigrant Land-holders

Undue importance has also been given to immigrants, but their numbers are relatively small and only significant locally. Since about 1940, or a little earlier, there has been an influx of Africans into the Lake Plains: – Nyakyusa from the Highlands (chiefly from the Central Region – Pokati), Ndali from the Ndali Highlands of Rungwe District and Kinga from the Njombe District to the east beyond the Livingstones; from northern Nyasaland have come Ndali, Lambia and Sukwa, and there are also small numbers of Bemba and others from Northern Rhodesia. They have been attracted in the modern era, when local movement is easier, by the possibility of obtaining land in the northern Lake Plains, where rainfall is so high and unoccupied farmland has been available.[1]

These immigrants have been and continue to be almost entirely restricted to the north in the "low-density region" (see map, facing page 17). This contained the surprisingly empty area of the country and still there remain vacant lands to be taken up. Such land is usually of relatively inferior quality, easily subject to erosion and lost of fertility on the slopes of the foothills and unsuitable for paddy cultivation except in small, isolated basins. The immigrants, that is, have settled in areas rejected by most Nyakyusa. There, locally, the newcomers outnumber the indigenous population. In the flood plains, the high-density regions, the proportions of foreigners cannot be more than one or two per cent. of the population, and in most villages there are none at all.

It is true that these newcomers do occupy land which might well be used to relieve the congestion nearer to the Lake; but in practice this would not be at all easy. To take a single example: the newly opened area in the north of the chiefdom of Mwaluma between the Kiwira and Songwe rivers is being rapidly taken up by Ndali from the north-west, Nyasalanders and Nyakyusa from the Central Region (in that order of numerical importance). A few miles to the south, in the centre of the same chiefdom, the inhabitants of the Ibaka area consistently refuse to move although they manifestly cannot meet their land needs within their present villages. They, and others like them, say with some truth that paddy cultivation is less easy and less profitable in these newer and higher areas, and that poor communications make the disposal of produce more difficult. They also say, but more often leave to inference, that they are unwilling to leave their traditional village areas and begin in new parts, even though the move required is only one of a few miles. They have not yet become sufficiently aware of the permanent gravity of modern land shortage to overcome their parochial inertia. By the time they do become aware of it the opportunity may well be lost, for immigrants continue to arrive in twos and threes, and the last vacant land may be taken. To date, however, some vacant lands remain, albeit of poor quality, into which the densely packed Nyakyusa could move, and the immigrants cannot be blamed, at least not yet, for preventing the expansion and resettlement of the local population.

At the moment the chiefs and headmen in these northerly areas are keen to obtain as many of these immigrants as possible in order to swell the number of their commoners, the size of their villages and thus, directly, their own prestige and importance. Newcomers have every opportunity to be allocated as much land as they wish, where they wish, and many are liberally assisted with food in the traditional way until they harvest their first crop. I heard no complaints from either the local Nyakyusa or the immigrants, and relations seemed to be good. Strangers must conform to Nyakyusa ways of life and to the authority of the headmen and chief, although

1. Immigrants from Nyasaland are said to have come following the introduction of new regulations there prohibiting the cultivation of steadily eroded hill areas.

10:Gulliver E-5 (1954-1955) 1958 F'HU7 Ngoude F'HU7
Nyakyusa

in fact they usually settle on the common East African pattern of scattered homesteads, each in its arable area, and not in the tight Nyakyusa village pattern.

I think that the headmen and chiefs concerned would not welcome a restraint on immigration, for it offers them a chance to enslave the economically profound peregrine of their fellows in the flood plains, to whom at the moment they feel inferior. They would, of course, most probably prefer indigenous Nyakyusa, could the latter be persuaded to settle there. As it is, at least some of the Nyakyusa of these northerly villages are trying to move into the flood plains, where they can more easily cultivate paddy and where they can join in a more active and ebullient village life.

One type of foreigner to the Lake Plains is the man (almost invariably a Nyakyusa from the Highlands) who has obtained land but does not settle on it nor in any village. He continues to live in his upland village and comes down to the plains only to cultivate and harvest his paddy field. This is entirely against Nyakyusa land law and custom and, in fact, such an absentee land-holder has often made a substantial monetary gift to the chief or headman for the protection of this extra-legal privilege. These strangers are frequently among the more wealthy upland Nyakyusa, who can afford such payments or them, and often they are of chiefly rank themselves, perhaps having kinship ties with the local chief. There are probably no chiefdoms where such strangers have not obtained paddy fields, though naturally those which contained a good deal of vacant, usable paddy land at the beginning of the cash-cropping era have most.

This does arouse a certain amount of ill-feeling and opposition amongst local villagers who have insufficient land themselves, for they lose land and gain no numerical strength or profit of any kind. The illegal action of the local chief is also condemned, especially as the chiefs should not in any case assume absentee powers. On the other hand it must be noted that the commoners philosophically accept the supposedly protected peregrines of their chiefs under European rule and they expect the chiefs to take advantage of them. As with the case of the minority of large land-holders, the actual effect is not particularly great and reformation here would be a minor palliative. Nevertheless in this matter there is a definite and unpopular infringement of villagers' rights and of the local customary law.

One other group of strangers may be noted for the sake of completeness. That is the Kisi, who have for at least two generations been settling along the lake shore itself from Mazoma in the east to the Songwe river (and beyond) in the south-west. They have come from the north-eastern shores of the lake and in the Nyakyusa area they are principally fishermen who do not, therefore, compete with the indigenous population economically. They cultivate only tiny plots of cassava and sometimes of finger millet, although a few of the younger generation are now trying to grow a little paddy also. The total number of Kisi involved cannot be more than a few hundred and they have probably not increased much over the past decades. They follow an almost separate existence from their Nyakyusa neighbours, not intermarrying, and following their own way of life.[1]

1. The many Kisi settlements in Rungwe District are in the Nyasche area, an isolated peninsular south of the Lake Plains, where they number about 1,200. Another 1,000 are scattered on smaller peninsulars and in bay settlements beaches further south along Ikuti and Kyela. They are widely valued as workers, and they do change their wages for cattle from Nyakyusa chiefs fishing.

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CHAPTER IV

THE RESULTS OF LAND SHORTAGE

311 As indicated in the short outline of traditional land tenure in Chapter II, the system developed and worked adequately in the old situation (both before and after European conquest) when land was plentiful in relation to the people's demands. Any villager who wanted land had the right to be allocated fields; any established villager who wished to expand his cultivation could do so without difficulty. Movement between villages was easy, and especially after the establishment of European peace, for everywhere newcomers were welcomed to increase the strength and prestige of the village, and land was available for them. The young men in their age-villages were able to obtain sufficient arable land and they were able to establish their economic independence after marriage, if not earlier. Because land was plentiful there was little real concern for security of tenure and disputes over land were both uncommon and unimportant.

By 1931 the basic fact was that there was insufficient land to meet the people's requirements in the alluvial flood plains – as also in many Highland areas – and there remained little or no unused land which could be taken into cultivation.

Inheritance of Land

426 In these earlier and more spacious days, inheritance was chiefly significant in moveable property – cattle pre-eminently, and grain, money and other goods – and also in the matter of widows and the custody of children.
451 The rules of inheritance were the same in principle for all this property. Inheritance was by groups of full-brothers rather than by individuals, and therefore when a man died, his sons, his widows and his wealth were taken by the eldest surviving full-brother; failing a full-brother, a half-brother would inherit (the eldest surviving at the time). Only when all the deceased's brothers were dead, or if they had moved away and severed practical relations, were the dead man's sons able to take up the property in their own right. Then each group of full-brothers tended to inherit as separate, corporate groups. Although the separation into "houses" was not as strong and
[518] notable as amongst some African peoples,[1] yet there was a fairly strong solidarity between full-brothers such that, for instance, their cattle were regarded as a distinct and separate herd, over which the senior brother had principal control and in which half-brothers had little direct rights.

Originally land inheritance did not follow this scheme because it was
[429] an unimportant matter, for ideally a man obtained his building plot and arable land at the time of the formal establishment of his age-village, and he preferred if possible to continue to live amongst his comrade. Consequently, when a man died, his brothers and his sons and nephews normally had land of their own and did not wish for more elsewhere, especially as the deceased's land would probably be in another age-village. Out of respect for the dead man and his contemporaries, the chief heir often made a token residence at the deceased's homestead and then, after a brief period, would obtain the approval of the villagers to return to his own village and holding again – perhaps at the cost of some beer or a goat. Sometimes the heir or another member of the lineage might take the opportunity to leave his own village

1. See Wilson, M. 1936, pp. 111ff. Cf. also my The Family Herds, London, 1955, Chapters 3 and 4, for a description of a strongly conjoined "house" system.

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Nyakyusa

423 believed that parents and children should live apart.[1] In the same way, and
482 for similar reasons, an elder brother tries to make provision for his junior
585 when the latter marries if their father is already dead. The practice of the
father is not a legally required one, although it is nowadays increasingly
common and sons have begun to expect it: the practice of an elder brother
is now legally required in the matter of land and probably always has been
in the matter of cattle.

[847] The difficulties are obvious when a man dies and leaves several sons
but only a small-sized holding. To date no clear ruling has emerged and
unfortunately the African District Council did not deal specifically with
such details when introducing the new law. How much land an eldest
brother can reasonably retain for himself is perhaps not determinable in
practice except in specific relation to the nature, locality and fertility of the
holding in question, the plots already held by the man himself, the needs
and number of the younger brothers and any holdings they may have, and
[849] the location of the villages in which they severally live. There is also plenty
of scope for disagreement between half-brothers over portions of the paternal
holding which had been retained by the father himself for his own use; over
portions allocated to a wife who has borne no sons or whose sons have died,
and over permanent trees. The situation is still fluid and there has not yet
been time enough for a common and generally acceptable solution to be
established. Consequently each group of sons tries to solve its own particular
problems in this matter as best it can, torn between old values and new
attitudes and needs.

593 Relations between both full-brothers and half-brothers tend often to
428 be severely tried at times of inheritance. It is not primarily, I think, a case of
brothers' greed for valued land tending to overcome bonds of fraternity
and co-operation; but it is rather that a father's arable holding is often not
able to provide adequate amounts of arable land for each of his sons, and
yet they find the very greatest difficulty in obtaining land elsewhere. Already
the traditional kin-group comprising the sons and grandsons of a group of
[182] full-brothers had begun to break down even before land shortage became
serious. Now the group of full-brothers itself tends to be dispersed as men
obtain land where they can and it is endangered by dissensions over land
rights and land division. Increasingly, it seems, a Nyakyusa man is becoming
detached from his brothers and he tends to establish an independent family
unit comprising his immediate family alone – that is, himself with his wives
and children. We cannot attribute the whole cause of this modern trend to
land shortage and economic difficulties, of course, for involved also are
new ideas of individualism and of personal effort and reward, and the
decreasing need for the consistent support of brothers in social, economic
and ritual activities.

578 Younger brothers may, and sometimes do in fact, agree that the
423 paternal holding is already too small for further sub-division, or that the
428 small parts which can be made available to them are scarcely worth having –
especially if they live some distance away. On the other hand, the eldest
brother may already have obtained a holding in his own village and is
therefore willing to make only a small claim or none at all in the interests
of his juniors, and he may then divide the inheritance amongst them alone.
Usually, so acute is the dearth of land, the holding is divided between two
• [311] or more brothers. It is split into small plots so that each brother has a share
of paddy, food-crop and banana land, and these are commonly a half acre
or even less in size nowadays. As already mentioned, by a kind of modern
[696] equity the local African courts generally favour the claims of the younger

1. See Wilson, M., 1951, p. 139 and passim. "The overt purpose [of age-villages] is the separation of sons and mothers, of fathers-in-law and daughters-in-law." (Ibid p. 142).

10:Gulliver E-5 (1954-1955) 1958 F317 Ngonde F317 Nyakyusa

brothers, and this is compelling the increasing and continual fragmentation of holdings at time of inheritance. Even so, if there are several brothers (i.e., sons of the deceased) the youngest among them may still be unable to obtain a plot, or at least not one of an economically viable size, and they are then compelled to try to gain admittance to some other village as newcomers, there to be allocated land.

The shortage of land is, therefore, not only making inheritance very considerably more important, but it is assisting in the establishment of new kinship attitudes and a redefining of fraternal relations. The position is most confused at the moment as the old system continues to exist alongside the new, sometimes more or less successfully, but often in intractable opposition. At the present time the observer can only mention general tendencies, for it is impossible as yet to foresee what the eventual result will be, and there are, in any case, many other factors involved besides those of the inheritance of scarce land.

In so far as we are primarily concerned with land problems in this essay, the basic factors are that land is newly scarce, that there is virtually no alternative activity in the country to the arable use of the land, and that therefore each son must try to obtain a share in the often inadequate holding of his father. I suggest that no form of inheritance can deal with such a situation satisfactorily – at least it is highly doubtful if any has yet emerged in an area of land shortage in Eastern Africa – and thus there are bound to be severe difficulties and a deterioration of inter-personal relations between near kinsmen who are most in competition. The new inheritance law of the Nyakyusa has narrowed the range of potential conflict from the patrilineal descendants of a grandfather to the sons of a single father; but if it has obviated possible hostility between the generations and between paternal cousins, it has also removed much of the common interest and mutual inter-dependence between them.

The Right to Land, and the Authority of the Village Headman

Although the traditional principle still exists that every villager has a right to arable land within the village boundaries, yet it is no longer possible to carry it out in practice. Every village headman, in my experience, attempts to ensure that each of his men has land, but he cannot always succeed, and most especially he cannot provide every one with as much land as he would like, because of sheer spatial limitation.

Nowhere any longer does the old principle now hold that an established villager may, without permission or notification, take vacant land into cultivation as part of his holding. When land becomes vacant it must now revert immediately to the village as a group, that is to the common pool from which the headman as village authority makes allocations. There are so many and such varied demands for land nowadays that no man acting on his own can presume to take up vacant land, and only the headman may decide allocation. No person can now obtain land, whether he be an established villager or not, unless he is allocated it by the headman – or, in the many large villages typical of the Lake Plains, by the headman's assistant, *ngwakyisa*, who is delegated authority in a section of the village.

Land becomes vacant when a man shifts to another village, when a man dies and leaves no active heir who desires to take up the deceased's holding, or (but seldom today) when a man gives up part of his holding due to his inability to use the whole of it. In all these cases the land is immediately re-allocated by the headman, probably not as a single unit any longer, as best he can among a crowd of land-hungry villagers – established men seeking extra land to meet the needs of growing families or for increasing cash-crop

10:Gulliver E-5 (1954-1955)1958 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

630 production, young men seeking their own independent holding, and new-
311 comers to the villages who seek to settle there.
423 The modern shortage of land has therefore considerably increased the authority and the activities of the village headman. Nowadays he is the prime mover in all changes in land-holding, other than by inheritance or temporary loans and gifts. In these latter, and particularly in inheritance, he has necessarily become an important interested party whose influence cannot be ignored, whose approval is desired and whose assistance is frequently sought both as arbiter and witness. Much more than before, and directly because of the scarcity and value of land today, he is the principal controller and allocator of land – though, of course, he remains subject to the state of public feeling and the opinions of his villagers. His position has been further strengthened by his status at the base of the administrative hierarchy in modern local government, whereby he is given executive responsibility for his village and its people. As always, disputes over land are taken before him in the first instance and here he acts not only as a judge but also as the expositor of village opinion and public knowledge. Such disputes are increasing in number, giving him more work and responsibility and also more opportunity for the expression of his status. Meanwhile his traditionally crucial ritual and magical (anti-witchcraft) powers continue, though now in somewhat attenuated form.

Fragmentation and Dispersion of Holdings

423 It has been shown how the inheritance of land, now of increasing
423 importance, results normally in the splitting up of a man's holding.[1] Whether
311 a young man obtains an inherited share of his father's land or he obtains an allocation in another village, its size is likely to be small – smaller than the holdings of his father's generation. Tiny, uneconomic plots are to be seen everywhere in the flood plains.

At the same time a man's holding is tending to comprise a scattered, heterogeneous collection of small plots, as he has obtained land when and where he could. An actual example will illustrate this: a young man had [341] about a tenth of an acre behind his house on which he was growing maize and beans; he had about a quarter of an acre which was his share of his deceased father's land, and another quarter of an acre which had been [343] allocated to him by the headman when a vacated holding was split up, and on both of these he cultivated paddy. This man had only small hope of obtaining more land, unless one of his brothers died without sons, for he had already been refused by the headman a share in a recently vacated holding on the grounds that, unlike many of his contemporaries, he already had at least some arable land.

Even amongst older men the holding of scattered plots is common. This is partly the result of the earlier expansion of cultivation when the formerly unused lands were put under paddy, and partly because older men too, lose no opportunity, in the face of scarcity, to take up any land they can. The Nyakyusa ideal is to have a single large holding, preferably stretching away behind the homestead – or alternatively two fields, one for paddy out in the open plains and one for food crops nearer home. This ideal becomes less and less practicable. There seems to be little or no need for this scatter of plots on account of soil and fertility differences, for these are generally few and unimportant within the area of a single village.

311 In my sample villages the average number of separate plots was about
423 three per holding. There was a notable difference between villages in relation to the average size of villagers' holdings. Where land was more plentiful the

1. If there is only one son to inherit the holding, it is most likely that he will have to give way to the pressing demands of his father's brothers' sons if he is not to run himself off from his lineage.

10:Gulliver E-5 (1954-1955) 1958 F317 Ngonde F317
Nyakyusa

number of separate plots per holding was less than where land was scarcer; at the same time the average size of separate plots was smaller in those more land-hungry villages. The reader may refer to Table III (page 15) for some illustrative figures. Though differences are not yet very great, nevertheless there seems to be a fairly clear correlation between the average size of villagers' holdings on the one hand, and on the other the number and size of separate plots, and this is entirely borne out by my general information obtained in villages where actual measurements were not made. The inescapable conclusion must be that increasing scarcity of land in the Lake Plains leads to increasing fragmentation and dispersion of holdings; further, the present land situation and land tenure system can only lead to a continuation of this trend.

To emphasise the actual situation in 1955, let me reiterate the results of my own village surveys in the very high density region. In a village in Kaswesi's chiefdom only a quarter of the younger men had paddy land of their own, holdings averaging about three-quarters of an acre; in a village in Mwakipesile's chiefdom, only 17 per cent. of the younger men had paddy land and holdings averaged about half an acre (cf. Table VII, page 37). These two examples are taken from the areas of most severe land shortage and are not therefore altogether typical of the whole Lake Plains. Nevertheless, I do not think that they are entirely atypical; more importantly, they indicate the present trend. Within another generation this fragmentation and scatter of holdings may well be the common feature everywhere in the flood plains unless the system of tenure and inheritance is modified. If the increase in population is quickened through improved medical facilities, better diet and housing, and improved conditions generally, then the position will become more acute. Such an increase is only to be expected. The Nyakyusa have decisively entered a money economy and they have learnt to seek higher standards of living. Only from their fields, by cash-cropping, can they expect to earn their livings and the demand for better living will not be curtailed – nor, of course, is it desirable that it should be.

There is another aspect of this whole matter which must be considered. It relates to the movement of individuals between villages. Such movement was, in earlier European days, a crucial factor in the age-village structure, for it was not only exceedingly frequent, but also it tended to undermine the idealised coeval basis of village life. Movement between villages is increasingly difficult now, for a newcomer naturally cannot easily obtain land, nor as much land as he would desire even at a moderate demand. Nevertheless, the reasons for movement persist, and they will do so whilst the fear of witchcraft remains and whilst illness and misfortune are attributable to the unfavourable aura of a place. There remains also the tradition of moving so that a man may escape from bad relations with kinsfolk or neighbours, or from the obloquy resulting from his own disapproved actions. Much social and psychological tension is being created now as a result of the new difficulty of movement, and so far the Nyakyusa have not evolved alternative methods.

On the other hand, so deeply engrained is the notion of the prestige and power which accrues to a village by virtue of the number of its inhabitants, that headmen and villagers alike remain most reluctant to refuse to accept newcomers, even when it inevitably means that the present inhabitants must meet a further decrease in the average amount of land available per family, for a newcomer must be allocated a holding if he is to remain. Consequently, if a holding is for any reason left vacant, a headman tends to refuse to re-allocate some or all of it amongst his villagers and thus to augment their holdings; but instead he keeps it in reserve pending the hoped-for arrival of another newcomer. Men desiring to leave their own village try to get

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sown of such reserved land elsewhere. Such land is cultivated in the meantime on a kind of year-to-year lease by one or more of the villagers as allowed by the headman.

Even when no vacant plots exist a headman will still accept newcomers. If they are young men they must be prepared to go landless for the time being (i.e., to remain dependent on their father's fields elsewhere) until such time as land becomes vacant. If the newcomer is an older man, then the headman will try to persuade one or more of his villagers to give up portions of their holdings and he will often cede part of his own land. The newcomer is therefore often allocated small strips and plots here and there in the village arable area and he thereafter joins the land-hungry crowd seeking to expand their holdings. In one village in which I worked where land shortage was critical (Kapugi, Kaswezi's chiefdom), there was not a single patch of arable land unworked; yet here the headman had, with full village approval, accepted three newcomers during the first nine months of 1955. Two of them were young men, one unmarried, and they could not expect to obtain land for some time except for a small banana plot. The third newcomer was a middle-aged man from a village some 12 miles away in another chiefdom. The headman had given him a half-acre plot out of his own paddy field and was laboriously begging pieces of land here and there from his people in order to make up a new holding of perhaps an acre. The headman himself had only about three and a half acres of arable land; he had at least one adult son who had not yet acquired an arable plot and he had other sons and brothers' sons owning only small fields. Yet he favoured this stranger, this newcomer. He was quite firm in his resolution to accept other newcomers in the future and in this he believed that he was acting as a good headman should. As far as I could learn he was supported by his villagers.

[571]

This is not, by any means, an isolated or even unusual phenomenon. It is, I feel, important to bear in mind this illustration of contemporary affairs. Firstly, because it shows another way in which holdings are fragmented and dispersed; and secondly, because it demonstrates how, so far, the Nyakyusa have refused to face the situation of land shortage, and how they continue to follow traditional practices and values associated with village prestige. These people complain of their inability to obtain sufficient arable land, but they are not yet prepared to make the mental and social adjustments which might at least partly relieve their new predicament. On the other hand, they themselves understand the need for movement and perhaps they are right in their implied insistence not to discard their cultural ideals. Their insistence on accepting newcomers and their willingness (however dimly perceived and expressed) to share their land with the landless are not discreditable attitudes, even if they are economically untenable.

Security of Tenure and Disputes over Land

[561]

As already noted, under traditional land tenure a Nyakyusa had good security in his holding so long as he continued to live in the same village. The only alteration of tenure occurred at the "coming-out" ceremony of a new chief when the older men would, if required, move aside in order to give their sons' generation the best land. This did not invariably happen in any case. Fundamentally, however, security of tenure is not a matter of great importance to a people who have plenty of land, and land which is more or less of the same quality. Indeed, convenience of location in respect of one's own homestead was almost the only value land had as such. Occasionally a more dominant chief might try to seize a commoner's field to allow of his own expanded cultivation; it was most unusual for him to succeed, and even if he did the dispossessed villager suffered little real deprivation, for he could easily obtain another field fairly near at hand.

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[643]

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Security of tenure has continued into European times, and although perhaps weakened slightly in one way through the exaggerated powers which accrue to modern Government-supported chiefs, it has been strengthened by the modern peace and rule of law and the more efficient system of justice provided by the established local courts. According to G. Wilson (Wilson, G., 1938, p. 32) the increase in the movement of individuals between villages in earlier European times (i.e., up to about 1940-45) directly caused a lack of attachment to individual plots, and thus security of tenure was not considered particularly important.

The new situation of land shortage does not affect the basic position, or rather, by producing a high scarcity value on land, it has brought about an intensification of individuals' rights over their holdings. No longer dare a chief or headman attempt to commit such illegal acts as the seizure of a villager's field, so long as that villager is not afraid to publicise the affair. A man is not, and cannot afford to be, prepared to lose his field, for he cannot replace it with any certainty, either in a convenient location or elsewhere. A headman may sometimes bring strong pressure to bear on some of the men of his village to try to persuade them to give up portions of their land to assist a newcomer or a landless neighbour, but a villager can and does refuse and there is no legal authority which can override him here. As the land shortage becomes more obvious and more acute so men become less willing to allow their holdings to be touched for any reason, by anyone. The re-allocation at a "coming-out" ceremony appears to have been dropped nowadays[1] and thus a man holds his land undisturbed until his death, when it passes by inheritance to his sons. There are cases now where grandsons of the original holder occupy land through undisturbed and undisputed inheritance. A man can, as he wishes, loan a kinsman or friend a plot in his holding, or he can make an outright gift. The principal restriction which remains is that a man must continue to live in the village in order to retain these rights; he must relinquish them if he permanently goes to live elsewhere. Nevertheless, the land of a well-established villager would be kept for him pending his hoped-for return, for if he has left in umbrage and fear because of suspected witchcraft, then he may be persuaded to come back after a time. The headman and his neighbours should in fact persist in their attempts to persuade him, even to the use of force, for this is not only a moral duty of age-mates and fellow-villagers but is also an effort to remove the implications of their alleged witchcraft and anti-social conduct.

Once, therefore, a man obtains land he has absolute rights in it during his continued residence in the village. Especially today, older men seldom shift their homes and almost all land is now held on a tenure which will be passed on by inheritance. .

Boundary disputes are few. Usually, and increasingly, village boundaries are well known, and field boundaries invariably are. During my field measurements in the sample villages, I never met any difficulty with my local teams in quickly establishing the ownership and exact limits of any plot. Boundaries are usually marked by small ridges of accumulated debris or by narrow paths, and these form an intricate and irregular network throughout a village's arable area. They are so well known that there is very little scope for a greedy man to attempt to encroach on a neighbour's holding at hoeing time. If minor disagreements do arise at that season they can be immediately settled – by appeal to neighbours working nearby if necessary – and the headman or his assistant may well not be called in at all.

1. This is the case in the Lake Plains. In some of the more conservative Highland chiefdoms where the rank economy is less advanced and land scarcity is not serious, there still appears to be some re-allocation in favour of the young man in the traditional way. In general, however, it is clear that the traditional age-village system of land allocation is obsolete; see pages 29ff.

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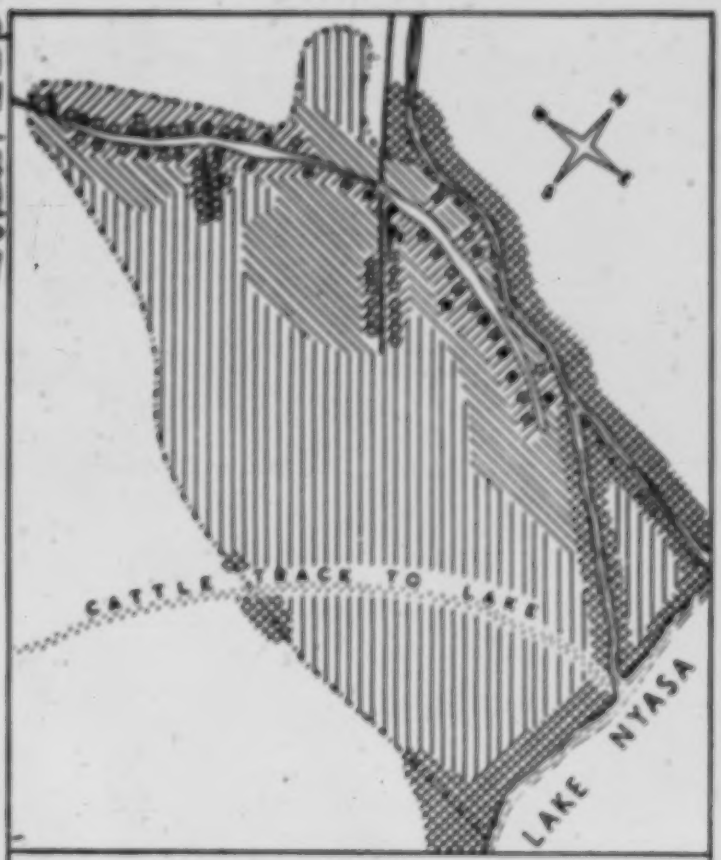

SKETCH PLAN OF KAPUGI VILLAGE,
KOROSO'S CHIEFDOM, 1955

·REFERENCE·

[Facing p. 29]

as determined by the village headman. But even building sites with the essentially associated banana groves are becoming increasingly scarce and valuable, for no one desires to decrease the amount of arable by enlarging the built-up areas - rather the reverse. The number of young men's villages is therefore diminishing and congestion of their huts is increasing to the stage very often where no more than a narrow passage is left between adjacent houses. There comes to be a wider age range in the young men's hamlets where, often, a large village provides only one for all its sons. Smaller villages sometimes provide no accommodation at all for their sons, who are thus compelled to seek membership of a neighbouring group. These hamlets are mainly regarded nowadays as temporary residential areas for the young men until such time as they move on to an existing holding - their father's or some other. There is therefore no attempt to provide sufficient space for an adequate banana grove with each young man's house, let alone a food-crop plot behind it. The arable land beyond the congested huts already belongs to inhabitants of the main village. When a young man is able to leave and take up a holding, his vacated site (together, often, with the hut) is taken over by a waiting youth who has probably been sharing with another hitherto.

These young men's hamlets do not, any longer, eventually mature and become villages in their own right with their own headman and arable lands. Formerly, when this occurred, they would probably have taken over a good deal of the lands of the old village, as the young men exercised the privileges of their new maturity against their elders with the emergence of the new chiefdom. New chiefdoms, and with them new villages, no longer emerge, and this is mainly because Government has prohibited the bifurcation of petty chiefdoms on the death of the old chief, as it is considered inconsistent with the development of stable, modern local government. Additionally, however, the shortage of land can no longer allow of the traditional expanding politico-territorial organisation. The elder men's villages are not now prepared to yield ground to the young men, and the latter cannot expand elsewhere. Thus political requirements and land restriction work together to make the old system obsolete and to freeze the spatial distribution of villages as it existed in early European times. As far as I could ascertain in the chiefdoms of the Lake Plains, probably no new village had emerged in the past 20 or more years, except for a few cases of large ones splitting into two for administrative and social convenience. Many villages there date back to pre-European days often now under the son, or even the grandson, of the original headman (though this is not essential or invariable in any way).

The age-basis of the Nyakyusa village is thus disappearing; indeed, in many villages it has already disappeared in everything but the young men's hamlets. Where the process has gone least far, there is still apparent a rough division of the single village into the old men's sector (men at least 50 years of age, and many much older); the middle-aged men's sector (men between about 30 and 50 years old, being the younger brothers or elder sons of the old men); and the young men's and youths' sector. On inheritance, sons tend to show a continued reluctance to move and live on their father's house-site and to become immediate neighbours of older men; they avoid it if possible, often allowing a middle-aged man to shift there instead. Nevertheless even this sort of age-division is rapidly vanishing and in very many villages a man's neighbour may be of any age.

We have seen that inheritance is now one of the chief methods of obtaining land. Under the new inheritance rules, this means that sons follow their fathers and take up their fathers' arable holdings, building sites and banana groves. Some young men inherit early, others inherit late; there is no longer any notion or possibility of the younger generation entering into its

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land as him. Young men compete with one another, with their elder brothers and with their fathers for allocations of land left vacant. We also see, however, that often in the larger families not all the sons are able to get a share of the paternal holding, or at least not a share of practicable size. Thus younger sons are forced to resort to trying to obtain vacant land elsewhere – possibly within the same village, but as often as not outside. Finally, the young man on his new holding may find his neighbours to be of any age; certainly they will not have been members of his own original corval hamlet.

The way for this changing concept of village life and the new sort of village was prepared in the years before land shortage became important. The changed political system has been briefly noted already, but no less important was the great increase in inter-village movement in earlier European days when peace and personal security had been established. During this period Wilson (1938, page 32) reckoned that perhaps 80 per cent. of Nyakyusa shifted at least once from the place where they first obtained fields. This estimate, whilst perhaps holding good for Highland Nyakyusa amongst whom Wilson mainly worked, was too high for the people of the Lake Plains, where about 40 per cent. is more correct according to my genealogical and village surveys. That is still a relatively high degree of mobility for a mainly subsistence, peasant society such as it was in those years. It is clear that the pseudo-fraternal bond of coevality could not persist as a main element of village life and consciousness, when in fact as many as half of the members of a village were not original corval founders but had come in from elsewhere. Before the land shortage, movement did not entail the shifting of young men to other young men's villages, or of older men to other older men's villages. It was, at least eventually, promiscuous movement, ignoring age categories. The compulsions of land shortage seem, in retrospect, only to have followed existing lines of village development and to have begun the completion of the process.

In the Lake Plains, therefore, the village persists as a close, territorial, land-owning group and as a specific cluster of homesteads and huts, usually with a village street, the whole closely hemmed in by continuous banana groves. Beyond this lie the arable lands, usually food-crop fields nearby and paddy fields farther off. In jealously protecting what it already holds, the village has gained a new exclusiveness, for the security of the individual land-holder is maintained by the corporate ownership of the village and by excluding outsiders as far as possible. On the other hand, it is no longer an age-village either in fact or intention, and it cannot be, for age-villages were consistent only with an expanding territorial system and a subsistence economy.

This brief analysis of Nyakyusa village organization in recent times applies only to the Lake Plains. In some parts of both the Central Region and the Northern Highlands the age-basis of Nyakyusa villages had most probably already been seriously weakened in pre-European times.[3] On the other hand, elsewhere, and particularly in the more conservative parts less affected by modern trends and the cash economy, the traditional age-village still exists in something like its old form.

Land shortage has appeared in the Highlands together with a developing cash economy, but the basis of agricultural and economic change lies mainly in coffee cultivation which, of course, requires relatively smaller fields than does paddy in the Lake Plains, but it needs more care and attention from the grower for moderate success. As far as I could see in the course of

1. Polygyny is still the norm amongst the older and many middle-aged men, and therefore a father often [illegible] several sons to inherit.
2. According to elderly informants in Western Kyimo, Mwakaleli and some central chiefdoms, and also the evidence of old village sites.

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my earlier labour migration enquiries in the Highlands, the village as a close residential unit is breaking up as the people are increasingly adopting the more common East African pattern of each family building its own home-stead in its own land-holding. These northern Nyakyusa say that they must have their coffee plots next to their homesteads for the sake of continuous supervision, and that this is impossible (which is true enough) where men live close together in compact villages. Again, coffee plots, with their standing, permanent trees, have become a valuable item of inheritance; sons lose the opportunity of taking them irrespective of the location of their cornfields or of the identity of their immediate neighbours. The values of land, cash-crops and material progress are placed much higher than the traditional values of neutrality; indeed, such traditional values are largely inconsistent with modern wants and aspirations.

Thus the Nyakyusa age-village has become almost obsolete and it would seem that it must inevitably vanish altogether even in the remaining conservative areas (e.g., in the east). Furthermore, its disappearance is leading to a distinct divergence between the Lake Plains Nyakyusa and those of the Highlands. How far this divergence will become permanent and basically significant cannot be foreseen as yet in this early stage. Clearly the compact village is best fitted to an arable economy of rice cultivation in the Lake Plains, and at least until there is further agricultural change it will persist as a most important social group.

Nevertheless, with its enhanced exclusiveness and relative social isolation and with reserved rivalry with its neighbours, the Lake Plains village is scarcely conducive to the encouragement of agricultural and economic development. Neither is it anything but harmful towards contemporary efforts in the politico-administrative sphere to reduce parochialism and to foster a sense of unity and co-operation beyond the village and the petty traditional chiefdoms. Whilst supervisory control of the land through the headman is in general excellent, reasonable and readily understandable to the people, yet the excess of restrictiveness, the competitive scrambling for vacated holdings and the jealous fears are surely more than merely unfortunate. There needs to be some modification to loosen the over-tight strings of village corporate ownership, to regularise the transfer of vacated holdings and to lessen the fears of village against village. These points are taken up again in Chapter V.

Cattle and Pastoral Requirements

Unfortunately, no great accuracy can be presumed for the Rungwe District cattle censuses, but the available figures are summarised in Table VI.

TABLE VI
NYAKYUSA CATTLE

	1951				1931	
	No. of cattle	*Acres per head*	*Cattle per person*	*Cattle per family*	*No. of cattle*	*Acres per head*
Lake Plains	31,618	4.1	0.5	[illegible]	26,832	5.2
Central Region ..	19,780	7.1	0.4	[illegible]	19,180	7.2
N.E. Highlands ..	19,095	7.4	0.4	[illegible]	17,165	8.4
N.W. Highlands ..	22,974	8.0	0.4	[illegible]	14,855	10.9
Total:						
Nyakyusa.. ..	92,867	6.4	0.4	2	80,032	7.3

The indicated increase in the numbers of cattle may well be attributable only to improved census enumeration by the Veterinary Department.

Although 6.4 acres per head of cattle for all Nyakyusa country, and even 4.1 acres in the Lake Plains, might seem to be adequate in a country so

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well covered with vegetation and with an reliable and plentiful a rainfall, yet, of course, the actual pasturage available is very considerably less as so much of the land is taken for arable and building purposes. There is in practice a most acute shortage of grazing land everywhere, except in certain parts of the north-west Highlands (Ukukwe). This shortage is most critical during the wet season, for at other times of the year the herds are able to graze over the arable fields, where herbage grows exceptionally rapidly after harvest as a result of the high rainfall.

Traditionally, each village had a roughly demarcated area of common pasturage which was not, and could not be, used for arable purposes. With the increased demand for arable land, this commonage has almost everywhere in the Lake Plains been gradually whittled away for permanent arable holdings. Headmen who control these pastures, and many of their chiefs too, are much worried about this process, about the break with tradition and the modern pastoral difficulties, but arable needs are given priority over grazing and the practice continues. In the flood plains, the higher-density regions, common pasturage has by now almost disappeared altogether. The little which remains is largely unusable for cultivation, consisting of infertile or badly drained areas – often the sandy, coastal strips covered with dense thicket and tall sedges which provide very little useful grazing. During the dry season, after the paddy harvest, the situation is fair, but during the cultivation season pasturage is entirely inadequate, and in addition the cattle are compelled to live and graze in extremely arduous conditions of standing water, mud, mosquitoes and flies. They do not obtain enough food then and they lose condition badly. There are many deaths from exhaustion, near-starvation and disease, and this affects the immature stock particularly. Only by ceaseless tenacity on the part of both man and beast can the herds be retained at all. There is no tradition of stall-feeding and so far the Nyakyusa have refused to adopt this measure of alleviation.

Yet, as the Nyakyusa are quick to point out, each family has only a few cattle. Most families have a cow or two, and the average is only about two to three head per family – *cf.* Table VI, page 34. Owners of large herds are relatively few, and herds of more than ten cattle in a single family are very uncommon. Although the cattle population is too great for the pasture resources now available, yet the animals are fairly evenly and thinly distributed amongst the dense human population. Goats and sheep are few – about 600 altogether – in the Lake Plains and of no significance. It is important to note that here we do not have a situation of large herds which might be reduced by some form of culling.

Cattle are held in high esteem by all Nyakyusa as a source of valued milk for the daily diet, as the means to marriage (in bridewealth), as a store of capital, as a symbol of prestige and as an essential element in important ceremonial activity. This kind of value system needs no emphasis here as it is common to much of Eastern Africa, but it may be noted that one of the principle uses of the large sums of money saved from wages in mining employment (labour migration)[1] and from the profits of cash-cropping at home is in the purchase of cattle. It is thought that money is best invested, saved and used in that way, once immediate material needs have been met.

Even with the high proportion of deaths from disease and the appalling conditions of the wet season, there are indications that the numbers of cattle are not decreasing and there may well be local increases. Apart from natural increase, there is fairly heavy buying from the Ndali people to the north-west in Rungwe District, and also from farther afield in Northern Nyasaland, and in Nyamwanga and Fipa tribal areas (albeit illicitly).

1. During the course of my earlier labour migration enquiries men would usually estimate their savings for me, when completing exodus questionnaires, by the number of cattle they could buy.

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233 Whereas in the Highland and Central regions the large numbers of cattle – in relation, that is, to the available pasture resources – are causing over-grazing and soil erosion, particularly in the hilly areas so often nowadays relegated to pasturage, on the other hand in the flood plains there does not appear, at least to the layman, to have been any serious effects on the land.
[24] The natural manuring of the paddy fields in the dry season is advantageous. In the Lake Plains it is the cattle rather than the land which suffer, but so far the Nyakyusa have done virtually nothing to meet the new conditions, other than to complain bitterly and fruitlessly.

The Young Men: Land Shortage and Labour Migration

423 The younger Nyakyusa men find increasing difficulty in obtaining arable land now that there are no longer vacant areas to be taken up, and the older men are no longer prepared to cede their land rights in favour of the younger generation, as they traditionally did. When occasional fields are left vacant, the young men must take their turn with their elders, who themselves are so chronically short of land – and the headmen community favour the older villagers with families as against the younger men. This means that in the high-density regions the majority of men under the age of about 30 years have little or no arable land, nor can they hope for it until the deaths of their fathers. In the congested village sites even their banana plots may be smaller than is desirable for the provision of the staple food.

[593] The young man, then, is compelled to remain dependent on his father's
[176] and elder brother's holding; indeed, headmen often justify their refusals to allocate plots to young men on the express grounds that the latter must share their elders' fields. Thus the valued independence of the young Nyakyusa is severely restricted and it seems that tensions and difficulties are beginning
[578] to arise between fathers and sons, and between brothers, because of this. Sons are blamed for not doing their fair share in the family cultivation; fathers are blamed for giving their sons inadequate shares in crops and crop incomes. It will be remembered that one of the fundamental principles underlying Nyakyusa society and its age-village organization is the spatial segregation of parents and children (*cf.* page 22). Now they are inevitably being put into competition with one another over inadequate fields in a single holding.

The young men are severely restricted, if not altogether cut off, from the
[434] opportunity to cultivate paddy in their own fields and thus to earn their incomes at home, for paddy-growing is the only way of earning a living in the
[343] Lake Plains. Yet it is these younger men whose money demand is greatest; to buy clothing, bicycles and other store-goods, and to buy cattle for marriage payments. They are therefore strongly attracted by the ready opportunities for taking up wage-labour abroad, in the mines of the Rhodesias and South Africa where wages are high (see Gulliver, 1957).

With the best will in the world, when, as in the very high-density region, the average holding is little more than an acre and a half – when, that is, the older men themselves desire larger acreages for their own cultivation needs – it is not possible for a father to allow his son to take large shares in his fields. In some cases a father does give outright to his adult sons strips of his holding, but plots so provided are necessarily small. Quite as frequently a father does not consider it possible to break up his holding in his own life-
[593] time, and sons are expected to assist in the common cultivation and to continue merely to be given a share in the family proceeds at harvest. It is not
[167] surprising, therefore, that very large numbers of young men from the Lake Plains migrate abroad to work. Only about one man in 20 has not been away at all before the age of about 25 years. Much higher proportions of men and larger numbers absolutely are temporarily absent from the Lake

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CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Briefly to summarize the contemporary land situation: in the Lake Plains it may be said that in the main the traditional land tenure system and land law still continue as the basis of native land holding today. The essential feature in recent years has been the acute land shortage in relation to arable lands under the current system of agriculture. Village unity and village exclusiveness have been increased and so also has the authority of the village headman in his control and allocation of land rights. Security of tenure has been strengthened, if anything, and one of the most important methods of obtaining land is now by inheritance. The new law establishing inheritance from father to sons, while generally acceptable to the people, is producing a number of civil suits which form the greatest proportion of the more important land cases before the local courts.

The shortage of land is principally the result of increased demands for paddy (i.e. rush crop) cultivation, although the population appears to be increasing slowly. In the high density regions almost all men have considerably less land than they could cultivate, especially under the impetus of the ox-plough, with the developing desires for money income. In the low density regions of the low foothills there is still some vacant or partly utilized land, though of very inferior quality for paddy cultivation. The shortage hits the younger men severely, and many of them cannot obtain land at all until the death or senility of their fathers. Fragmentation and dispersion of holdings is rapidly becoming serious and without check.

The first question which arises is whether anything can be done to ease the pressure of population on the country by making more land available, or by making its distribution more equitable.

The thinly populated parts of the northern region of the Lake Plains offer a meagre solution only, for the country is raised above the level of the flood plains and is often broken and hilly. Fertility is low, erosion is a constant danger and the paddy yield (if obtainable at all) is poor. Nyakyusa from the densely populated areas to south and east are therefore most unwilling to move there. In any case the available land, which remains safely and economically open to cultivation, is filling up fairly quickly – mainly by immigration. Certainly I do not think that it can supply sufficient space to meet modern needs. There is, however, no reason why immigrants should make a difficult situation worse, and therefore it is suggested that further immigration from outside the Lake Plains should be carefully controlled if not altogether prevented. Indubitably outsiders (almost entirely Nyakyusa from the Highlands) who hold land without permanent residence should be prohibited and their holdings reallocated to local inhabitants.

As I have already indicated (page 17), I do not think that the problem of men who hold unusually large acreages is particularly serious. Such large holdings are relatively few and will be inevitably split up by inheritance on the deaths of the present occupiers.

In the flood plains proper there is, as far as I am aware, extremely little new land which could be brought under cultivation. Mechanical assistance in the clearance of dense reed thicket[1] and in drainage schemes would produce

1. These areas of thicket are heavily inundated in the wet season but, if cleared, could be used for a dry season crop.

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some more land. How much could be made cultivable is beyond my appraisal, but it would be of valuable local assistance and ought not to be neglected. It does not, on the other hand, appear practicable to decrease further the amount of land used for building and village sites – the people themselves have already done this to some extent, and increased congestion in the villages would probably be undesirable on medical grounds.

There remain the local cases where part or all of a holding is not used (excluding genuine fallowing). An old man, or one who has for some reason lost the labour of his wives or sons, is sometimes unable to cultivate the whole of his fields. This is not common, or if it occurs the occupier is usually approached by his kinsmen, friends and neighbours for a loan or gift. Occasionally such land does remain relatively unutilised and the occupier refuses to release it even at the request of the headman. There is some feeling in the Lake Plains over this matter, and some men have suggested openly that such unused land should compulsorily revert to the village to be re-allocated by the headman.[1] Unless there is overwhelming demand for a new ruling here it would seem not to be a practicable policy and would only weaken security of land-holding and further increase the already over-exaggerated communal claim of the village. It would, of course, be difficult to assess when in fact a man had more land than he could or would cultivate, and it might easily lead to injustice if chiefs or headmen were given powers (however restricted) to interfere in a man's holding. Nevertheless headmen might be encouraged to keep a close watch on unused fields in their villages and to bring pressure to bear either to persuade the occupier to increase his efforts or to make temporary, witnessed loans to a neighbour.

In some cases land is left unused for a period whilst a man is away from home – usually while he is away at work. Where his absence is brief, little can or needs to be done, and already under Nyakyusa law the headman may authorise another villager to cultivate the fields on a year to year tenure: the absentee re-entering his holding on return. Occasionally, however, a young man may, for example, inherit land but then leave it for a number of years whilst he migrates to work in the mines. There is no adequate ruling as to the number of years' absence which should elapse before the absentee forfeits his land as an assumed permanent emigrant from the village. Headmen are reluctant to reallocate unused land for fear of the obvious legal and social difficulties should the absentee return, although some headmen are more hasty than others in this matter. Neighbours are often reluctant to borrow the land for fear of losing their opportunity of an outright allocation elsewhere in the village in the meantime. In some cases I saw fields which had lain unused for more than four years for these reasons. Like the unused portions of an old man's holding, these few cases arouse a good deal of land-hungry indignation, beyond their real importance in fact. Nevertheless some limit to the period of absence might well be introduced so that at least headmen know what their authority is in this matter, and so that men not prepared to work the land shall not be able to retain it indefinitely, It may be noted that the average length of absence of men in migratory labour is 18-24 months. A period of three years' continuous absence, at least without special cause, might perhaps be taken to indicate the automatic abdication of right of tenure.

[627]

If more land cannot be made available – or only relatively little – the obvious solution is a more intensive and profitable use of the existing resources. The Agricultural Department has long urged this policy and is attempting to put it into effect, pointing out the relatively inferior yields of paddy in the Lake Plains because of poor techniques and inefficient effort.

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1. Significantly enough, one of the men to bring this suggestion to my notice was the Nyakyusa Senior Agricultural Instructor in the Lake Plains.

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This is not the province of the Sociologist, and all that can be said here is that it seems the most practical and valuable policy that could be adopted: it should be made the chief line of attack on contemporary problems. Unfortunately the Nyakyusa do not appreciate the value of this sort of solution – at least not yet – and therefore they are not inclined to learn and to increase their efforts and to change their practices in the fields. They have not yet rid themselves of the notion that increased production of crops and thus increased profits from agriculture are correlated only with increased holdings. In view of the critical land shortage a crucial change of attitude and understanding is required. The Nyakyusa must learn that increased production and higher profits can come from new and more efficient techniques – i.e. intensive cultivation. They must also learn what is so difficult for the African, that quality of production is no less important than quantity and that therefore cash incomes and standards of living can be raised by improving the standard of crops to be sold. Indeed, with a tendency for world agricultural prices to fall due to increasing supply, quality of produce is of the greatest importance. This is notably so in the case of rice. Tanganyika African rice is reckoned as of lower quality than that from South-east Asia, which therefore commands not only the better price but also the main share of the keenly competitive market. But it is a difficult idea for the Nyakyusa to grasp. It seems obvious to them, inheriting attitudes of a former subsistence age, that three poor cattle are better than two good ones – and in fact so they were in the hazardous time of their grandfathers. Cash crop production is based on the same premise, but it cannot hold in a modern cash economy and in dealings with world markets.

If, however, the present land shortage continues unchecked by the successful introduction of new attitudes, ideas and techniques there may well be serious social and political repercussions in the not too distant future. Current schemes of tribal development will surely be rendered futile if economic activity is restricted and if land discontent is allowed to become important.

A second agricultural policy, and one of which less is heard, would be to stop the present dangerous monoculture – the persistence with paddy alone – and to attempt on a large scale to introduce second and third cash crops, particularly such crops as require intensive cultivation on small acreages. This may be forced on the people in any case if the gloomy prognostications of world rice prices are borne out in the next few years. Such a development would allow of a more stable economy and a more balanced agriculture, in addition to assisting towards a reduction of land difficulties. Experiments on a small scale in robusta coffee, palm oil and other crops have already been started by the Agricultural Department but, at least from the layman's point of view, they need priority in finance, attention and effort as a main part of an agricultural programme for the Lake Plains.

In the time available for my investigations it was not possible to enquire with sufficient care into the details and exact procedure of Nyakyusa land law (c.f. page 3) and therefore I am reluctant to suggest any drastic changes. The new inheritance law (page 21) is a step in the right direction and is clearly in keeping with modern trends, but it is suggested that its detailed operation on the ground and in the courts should be studied by the Native Authority and the Administration in order to attempt to define its meaning more clearly and to reduce the number of disputes. In order to check fragmentation before it has gone too far, it should be considered whether some minimum limit might not be imposed on the size of fields. Voluntary schemes for the consolidation of holdings, which have achieved some success elsewhere in Africa, might also be considered. These would be particularly valuable in the

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flood plains paddy fields where the ox-plough is in general use today. The general advantages of consolidation require no exposition here.

In view of the domestic, economic and social importance of cattle to the Nyakyusa and their potential value in a mixed intensive economy, and also in view of the fact that cattle are widely held in very small numbers by individual families, it is suggested that further and more urgent attempts be made to encourage stall-feeding, especially during the wet season. It is realised that past efforts in this matter have failed, and therefore a thorough-going scheme of propaganda and demonstration work is needed. Small fodder crops might be grown in the dry season and there is always plenty of banana fodder as makeweight.

The problem of the landless young men is likely to remain very difficult (see pages 36ff). It has to be remembered of course, that as they get older men do acquire land gradually. Nevertheless the proportion of landless, or virtually landless, men is high and is apparently increasing. The large-scale, post-war labour migration to the Rhodesias and South Africa is undoubtedly one of the more important results of land shortage and economic difficulty, and it is a valuable safety valve. As I have written elsewhere: "The serious and increasing land shortage amongst the Nyakyusa raises real doubts if there is any policy at all which can keep the men at home when there is not enough land for them – for the sake of both economic and general social stability it might be preferable in the long run if the continued pressure on the land resources were released by a degree of permanent emigration."[1] Since writing that and during the course of my land investigations I have only become more convinced of its rightness. I would now go so far as to say that Nyakyusa men should be encouraged to go abroad to work and even to become permanent wage-labourers in the industries and areas which demand labour and offer a higher standard of living. If the Nyakyusa are not to be seriously retarded in their home economic development, based as it must be on agriculture (i.e. on the land), the excess population must find an outlet elsewhere.

The general tendency towards greatly increased exclusiveness in the Nyakyusa village, involving renewed emphasis on the principle of land-holding only by residence and the forfeiture of a holding when changing residence, raises wider issues the future significance of which is not easily seen, especially by the Nyakyusa themselves. This narrow village parochialism does little to meet the increasingly difficult problem of land shortage, whilst the isolation it fosters is the antithesis of the wider outlook required by a developing society in a world money economy. I am fully aware of the strong native sentiment attached to the village and to village independence, but this was in fact diminishing in earlier European times before the new land scarcity set in (see pages 29-30). I do not think that this village system and the complex of attitudes and values it fosters is adequate to provide for the future – a future which the Nyakyusa do not yet clearly foresee. With some deference, therefore, I offer the following suggestion: a man who already has a holding should be able to retain it when he moves to live in another village. If his new home is too far away for the continued cultivation of all or part of the holding, or for any other valid reason, he should be able to sell or give it to anyone he wishes. Such gift or sale could be supervised by the headman of the village in which the holding lies. It might well, at first at any rate, be limited to a member of the same village, either an established villager or another man who is willing to come and live there. I think it important that disposal should be outright and not on leasehold terms, for the latter would most propably engender further complications and uncertainty of tenure, which must be avoided.

1. Gulliver, P. H.: *A Report on the Migration of African Workers to the South from the Southern Highlands Province, with special reference to the Nyakyusa of Rungwe District.* Provincial Administration, Tanganyika, 1955, page A21.

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Thus men wishing to move could seek to obtain, that is to buy, a holding from another man living in a village to which he is willing to move; a man leaving a village could either retain his holding in cultivation or obtain some compensation for the loss of his holding there. It is not likely that this would produce a rush of land sales, for only a relatively few men would wish to relinquish their holdings. It would, however, facilitate freer [166] movement between villages. Secondly, it would assist younger men to obtain holdings when they have earned and saved money at work.[1] Thirdly, it would assist profit-making cultivators to enlarge their holdings. Fourthly, it would help to bring to the Nyakyusa a realisation of the implications of the new money economy which they have inevitably and irrevocably entered, and it would demonstrate the value of holdings in relation to other commodities and activities. This kind of system would allow the village to retain much of its valued unity and control whilst reducing its excessive and potentially harmful exclusiveness. Such disposals of land, especially if by money sale, could be performed before the headman and other reliable village witnesses and they could be registered formally at the local court. There would need also to be some ruling limiting the maximum size of holdings (to prevent excessive buying) and preventing alienation to Africans from outside the Lake Plains. In this matter the village headman would probably be the executive authority.

Although the suggestion could be introduced simply as a scheme enabling the buying and selling of land, I am here more concerned with the problem of freer movement and the limitation of the reversionary rights of the headman on behalf of the village, whilst retaining his useful controls. A more general recognition of the economic value of land would probably follow, and if it proved practicable and useful, an extended and refined scheme could be introduced later.

My suggestions are, then, as follows:—

1. (*a*) an immediate restriction of immigration into the Lake Plains from whatever origin, and the encouragement of the movement of people from the congested areas into the lightly populated areas, accompanied by local development programmes there;

(*b*) the consideration of the practicability of drainage and thicket clearance schemes in order to make more land available;

(*c*) the absolute abolition of land-holding by non-residents and the reallocation through the local headmen of land so held to local inhabitants;

(*d*) the sympathetic encouragement of village headmen to watch unused portions of villagers' holdings with a view to their voluntary and temporary reallocation to neighbours in need.

2. (*a*) a detailed enquiry into the operation and administration of the new inheritance law, with a view to improving its details;

(*b*) an enquiry into the possibility of imposing a minimum limit on the size of holdings and plots;

(*c*) the introduction of local, voluntary schemes for the consolidation of holdings.

3. Covering the whole field of Nyakyusa land problems must necessarily be a progressive agricultural programme aimed, firstly, at a more intensive and a more efficient use of the land by improved cultivation methods, and, secondly, the abolition of monoculture by the introduction of other cash crops. This is, of course, the policy of the Agricultural Department, but it [648] needs more urgent application despite the obvious difficulties raised.

Stall-feeding of cattle, especially in the wet season, would assist to improve the living conditions of the herds and to increase their domestic and economic value.

1. It would also provide an alternative cash investment to the present purchase of cattle.

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423 4. The safety valve of labour migration should not be closed and young Nyakyusa should be encouraged to go away to work whilst wages abroad are relatively high.

5. Finally, with a view to the future as well as the present, it is suggested that an individual's land-holding should be at his own disposal, and, if desired, by money sale. Purchasers should, at first anyway, be limited to members of the village where the holding lies or to men willing to settle there.

These recommendations are to be taken only as a suggested programme for administrative consideration. No attempt can be made here to lay down the details of future policy, for that is the function and responsibility of administrators and technical officers, African and European, and not of the Sociologist.

The Sociologist could, however, with profit participate in the discussions and work preparatory to the development of a satisfactory programme. It is essential that a complete programme be arranged and executed to tackle all or most of the problems concerning the land, economics and agriculture. Tinkering with different aspects here and there is likely to be unfruitful and is unlikely to command the propaganda and drive of a comprehensive scheme. Such a planned scheme should be able to catch the imagination and support of the people themselves, especially if they and their leaders can be brought to see the reasons for it and the value it may bring.

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